

FROM DANTE xTO SAINT CATHERINE

little later she founded at Vadstena her order of the Holy Saviour, composed of women and men alike, each monastery containing two convents, the Abbess to be as the Virgin Mother in the midst of the Apostles. Then she looked southwards to Avignon and Rome, and the Voice spoke again in her heart, inspiring her with an eloquent letter to Pope Clement, rebuking him as "a lover of the flesh " for the cupidity and ambition that he suffered to flourish in the Church, urging him to be converted before it was too late.¹ At the end of 1349, she left her native land, and went, by Milan, Pavia, and Genoa, to Rome for the Jubilee.

With Italy the rest of Birgitta's life was to be associated. At Farfa, whither she had fled with her company during the interdict, she was joined by her daughter—the tall, silent, golden-haired Catherine, unhappy and mysterious, a prey to depression and to fits of terror which were only too well-founded. While at Farfa, Catherine heard of the death of her husband. Returning to Rome, the Swedish ladies took up their residence first in the palace of the Pope's brother, Cardinal Hugues Roger de Beaufort, at San Lorenzo in Damaso, and afterwards in the house still shown (now a Carmelite convent) near the Campo de' Fiori. In the anarchy that followed the Jubilee, Catherine ran fearful risks at the hands of the lawless Roman barons who attempted to get possession of her. At last one of the Orsini, hearing that the Swedish ladies were to go to S. Lorenzo fuori le Mura on the Saint's feast, laid an ambush for them between the basilica and the gate. Converted by a miraculous blindness, the young baron became their most ardent protector, and through him they acquired the friendship and support of his house, and especially of Niccolo Orsini, the Count of Nola.

The desolation of the Eternal City struck deeply into Birgitta's soul, and inspired pages of pure eloquence not unworthy of Petrarca himself. A Voice ever cried in her heart : " O Rome, Rome, thy walls are broken down ; thy gates are left unguarded ; thy vessels are sold and thy altars are desolate ; the living sacrifice and morning incense are consumed in the outer

¹ *Revelationes*, VI. 63.